THE MODERN SCHOOLMAN

A Quarterly Journal of Philosophy

VOLUME XVI -19
November 1938-May 1939 -1942

AMS Reprint Company
New York

Reprinted 1966
with the permission of the
original publisher

AMS Reprint Company
A Trade Division of
AMS Press, Inc.
New York, N.Y. 10003

Manufactured in the United States of America

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Reviews of Recent Books

Vol. XVI No. 1

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Published Quarterly from November to May at Saint Louis University

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Entered as second-class matter December 1, 1928, at the post office at St. Louis, Mo., under the Act of March 3, 1879. Acceptance for mailing at special rate of postage provided for in section 1103, Act of Oct. 3, 1917, authorized on Jan. 15, 1929.

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The Psychology of Mysticism

Its Proper Object and Limitations

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Editor's Note: Joseph Maréchal needs no introduction to the philosophic world. Various publications that have appeared continually for over thirty years, but most of all the monumental Le Point de Départ de la Métaphysique *and the* Études sur le Psychologie des Mystiques *have made his name synonymous with profound and versatile scholarship.* The Modern Schoolman *is privileged to present to its readers this study of a field in which the writer excels.*

THESE pages make no pretense of offering the reader technical discussions or profound speculations on the psychology of religious mysticism; their modest purpose is to provide a few common sense reflections in reference to two classes of problems:

1. Does mystical experience, in any way, transcend the province of the psychologist?

2. In case of an affirmative answer to the foregoing question it may further be asked how mystical experience nevertheless furnishes matter for psychological research.

I

To satisfy the demand of the logician who requires from the outset a nominal definition of mystical experience is neither easy nor absolutely necessary. Of course, as a Catholic theologian, I believe I know what I understand, in the sphere of religion, by mystical experience to be truly and authentically such; but the precisions of the theologian, with the "judgment of value" which they imply, are drawn from sources other than psychology. On the other hand, as a mere psychologist, approaching from without experiences commonly called mystical, I hardly feel the need of formulating in advance a precise notion. My investigations cover a host of particular experiences which everybody connects with religious mysticism as well as analogous experiences the "religious" significance of which is disputed. Such is a sufficient explanation to begin my inquiry. Some one has very appositely remarked that an exact definition (although only nominal) is the product not the prerequisite of research.

More important than the acceptance of any particular nominal definition would seem, in this case, the need of determining beforehand the limits which psychology cannot transgress without denying its own methodology. It appears hardly necessary to recall that, in so far as it is a positive science, psychology remains, by right, restricted to the sphere of phenomena.—I mean the phenomena of consciousness conditioned empirically internally and externally. Psychology is unable to attain to the source of conscious activity, or to the ontological causes which modify these operations; all that concerns the intimate nature, the "being," the "reality" underlying the facts is beyond psychology and pertains either to metaphysics or (when it is question of supernatural realities) to theology.

In theory no reflecting person—whether he admits, or denies, the possibility of a transcendent ontology—consciously disregards the limitations implied in the field of psychology considered as an empirical science. Nevertheless, even in our time, in spite of the progress made in the analyses of the sciences, practice corresponds only imperfectly to theory. This is, perhaps, most true of the domain of religious psychology. Here more than elsewhere, the selection and interpretation of facts undergo the occult influence of that latent metaphysics—whether materialistic or spiritual—involved in the habitual suggestions of belief and unbelief. I say "occult influence," because the evil is not that the psychologist, whenever he likes, openly assumes in addition to his office of specialist the rôle of a metaphysician or of a theologian; the evil is that he too often assumes this double rôle under cover of psychology, pretending all the time (in good or in bad faith) to be occupied *only* with psychology. The association of different methodologies may be justified; the confusion of methodologies is always a defect.

This offence against methodology adopts, in fact, many forms for the most part indirect.

Let us point out only those which evoke the most attention among Catholic psychologists devoted to the study of mysticism.

"Frankly," one of these confided to me, "my first contact with the scientific literature of the subject (i. e. the psychology of mysticism) resulted in a great deception. Having, on the one hand, learned the methodology of experimental science at a first-rate university, and, on the other, being intimately conversant with the religious life of Catholicism, I was astonished at the free and easy manner (the words are not too strong) in which so many unbelievers — psychologists, ethnologists, doctors, psychiatrists—pretended to deal with the most sublime manifestations of Christian mysticism. My astonishment has since lost something of its ingenuousness, but nothing of its *raison d'être*. How often it happens that these worthy scholars who would consider themselves disqualified if they did not bring a scrupulous exactitude to the analysis of a clinical case, to the application of a test, or to the

deciphering of a papyrus, in the presence of the Christian supernatural suddenly forgot the most elementary exigencies of scientific objectivity. When, for example, they are in need of documentation concerning Catholic mysticism, they accept without examination the commonplaces of superannuated polemics, or at best draw upon sources of very poor quality; how frequently they neglect the study of environment and the reading of the contexts, disregard literary dependences, judge attitudes and behavior apart from the religious doctrine which renders them intelligible, construct upon a few acts or words of a mystic explanatory theories to which the whole life of this same mystic gives the lie,—and so on. Each of these technical errors recalls to me the more or less illustrious name of some learned contemporary who has committed it.

"Such carelessness on the part of men whom one cannot ordinarily accuse of lack of diligence reveals a prejudice, conscious or unconscious. Which? Is it the laudable purpose of pushing as far as possible the natural interpretation of mystical experience that makes them act thus. Evidently not, for this methodology requires above all a conscientious and complete inquiry. There remains the prejudice of refusing to mystical experience all real originality, that is of assigning to it in advance and absolutely the same essence and the same proximate causes as are ascribed to ordinary psychological events.

"I thought that so radical an assimilation of mystical phenomena with ordinary psychological phenomena far exceeded the exigencies and just claims of experimental methodology, and that in any hypothesis, Christian mystics deserved the impartial treatment which several outstanding psychologists who do not profess Christianity accorded them.[1] Being of this mind I endeavored in my own case carefully to observe the methodology which I reproached others with not sufficiently respecting. This scientific probity provoked a new astonishment, this time on the part of my own co-religionists. Some blamed me for not reserving the word 'mystic' to persons and things which Catholic theology recognized as such, and for thus favoring the confusion between the true 'mystic' and the false 'mysticism.' Others regretted that I had not even tried to demonstrate by psychological analysis (by the residue method!) the transcendent nature of the highest form of Christian ecstasy.

"Am I deceiving myself in believing that one and the other complaint, taken literally, would betray the same error on the part of Catholics as renders defective the works of so many unbelievers, viz., the disregard of the relative autonomy and necessary limitations of positive psychology? As a matter of fact psychology has no more right to deny transcendent causes than, while professing to be an empirical science, to incorporate 'judgments of value' taken from theology, or to conclude on its own authority as to the existence of metempirical realities whether natural or supernatural."

Are these reflections of a Catholic psychologist justified? In a sense, yes. They point out the three principal ways in which the psychology of mysticism may violate the positive methodology of the sciences, that is: (1) in supposing *a priori* the fundamental identity of mystical experience and ordinary psychological phenomena; (2) in borrowing from metaphysics, or from theology "real" definitions or "judgments of value"; (3) in formulating metempirical conclusions.

It would, indeed, be a flagrant lack of logic to pretend to be on this side of a frontier which one has already crossed. And yet how often in religious psychology do we come upon such unperceived and unavowed transgressions! Their very frequency makes one suspect, behind the illogicalities on the surface, the suppressed protestation of some primitive truth, trampled under foot by the exclusivism of empirical methodology. May not this suppressed truth be the natural unity of knowledge protecting an *inalienable* primacy against the artificial distinction of the sciences, a unity of knowledge resulting at once from the *subjective* unity of the scholar and the *objective* unity of the things he knows.

This brings us face to face with a problem as far-reaching as it is difficult which, in any case, it would be better not to attempt to handle superficially. Let us content ourselves with examining two aspects of the matter more especially applicable to the psychology of mysticism. From the subjective viewpoint one may ask: Is it certain that a psychologist can succeed, even in the restricted field of psychology, in thinking as a *mere* psychologist? From the objective viewpoint one may inquire: Is it certain that the formal object of a particular science such as psychology clearly prescinds from *every* intrinsic relation to the formal object of the superior, "sur-ordinate" ("sub-alternating") sciences?

Reasons which are sufficiently apparent suggest a negative reply to these two questions.

In every order of knowledge there exists a basic set of circumstances to which, whether one desires it or not, one inevitably returns. In the empirical sciences these circumstances have to do with invention, or direct experience. But, in the first moment—the direct moment—of every experience, internal or external, the delimitations of competence required by scientific methodology exist only in potency. The psychological activity functions in the first instance as a unit by reason of the combined action of the empirical and metempirical faculties. It is reflective thought which later introduces into the knowledge of the object the formal distinction between an *empiriological* aspect, a metaphysical aspect or even ultimately a theological aspect. Once this distinction is consciously present the scholar may decide to utilize for his particular investigation only the empiriological aspect, the strictly "phenomenal" component of acquired knowledge. But in thus relegating "between parentheses," in order "to prescind" from it, the part which belongs to the metaphysician and the theologian, he does not succeed, even if he has the desire, either in dismissing these personages, or in gagging them, or in declining further to listen to them. Besides, his abstraction being of a voluntary and methodological character, and opposed by the incessant return of the

spontaneous activity of the mind, will demand an appreciable effort in order to be sustained very long. Will such an abstraction ever be complete? Do not the most rigorous scientific explanations allow to subsist around their empirical contents the indistinct halo of habitual metaphysics?

Whatever is to be done regarding this inevitable metaphysical residue—a Scholastic philosopher will be here reminded of *"sensibilia per accidens"*—the majority of the inductive sciences, particularly those which deal with inorganic matter (chemistry, physics, physical chemistry, etc.) hardly appear, except in their theoretical parts, to be susceptible to variations of a metaphysical or religious nature. A mineralogist measuring crystalline forms, a geologist on his terrain, a chemist before his alembics are not forced, as a rule, to repress philosophical preferences which would interfere with their impartiality as investigators. The same assertion can hardly be made of biology, much less of general psychology, prehistoric anthropology, and comparative ethnology, and least of all of the history of religions and religious psychology where a methodological attitude of neutrality requires a voluntary determination easier to assume than diligently to sustain.

Let us examine another aspect of the problem. Is this methodological neutrality, whether difficult or not from a *subjective* point of view, *objectively* justified? Again: Can a particular science, without rendering its proper object unintelligible, strip it of every relationship with the object of other sciences?

Assuredly there can be no question of complete isolation. Chemistry ordinarily borrows its antecedents from mechanics, thermo-dynamics, and other parts of physics. Biology borrows from physics and chemistry. Religious psychology, itself, even the psychology of mysticism does not disdain to have recourse to psycho-physiology and to the medical sciences. No one contests the legitimacy of this osmosis of the empirical sciences. The scandal begins when, for example, a biologist believes he recognizes in the correlations of the living organism the indication of a superior unity, a vital principle or "entelechy"; or again, when a psychologist, comparing the sketchy reconstructions of associationism with the richer reality provided by internal experience, thinks he discerns in human consciousness the action of a spiritual component. It is the duty of such a biologist or such a psychologist, if they are to be consistent, to subjoin to the experimental formula, in addition to the terms directly stated, a reference to some guiding principle of a metempirical character. And how can one reproach a scholar who, in the name of experience, hazards this timid escape into the realm of metaphysics? One cannot charge him with having badly observed his facts, nor even with having stopped too soon in his experimental inquiry (to recognize a transcendent causality is by no means synonymous with interrupting the research into empirical antecedents), but with having permitted himself to be drawn aside from the kind of interpretation permitted to his science.

Why this absolute *prohibition* in respect to metaphysics or, on a higher plane, in respect to theology? Anybody who examines the matter closely will perceive that none of the reasons customarily proposed is of a peremptory nature or applicable in every case: neither the distinction to be preserved between the transcendent object and the empirical object; nor the presumed uncertainty of metaphysics; nor the "scientific" exigency of an experimental verification; nor the absence of a common measure between empirical induction and rational inference. In a last analysis it might easily be demonstrated that a single reason can explain the intransigence of the emphatic prohibition; this reason does not result, as one often believes, from the necessary conditions of the experience as such, but rather from conditions imposed upon the scientific experience by the *theoretical* unitary ideal of modern science. The latter, in fact, is directed to the strictly mathematical formulation of inductive laws, i. e. to an ideal limit—impossible, in itself, of realization—where the diversity of empirical data would be restored to the formal identity postulated by the application of number. To introduce into the object of experience any relationship whatsoever to metaphysics (or to theology), that is to say to introduce something essentially refractory to the process of reduction to number, would be to reject the theoretical ideal which, in the last instance, governs the whole field of scientific conventions. Many scholars who do not discern the source of these conventions obey, in fact, professional prejudices, or the routine procedures of their specialties in which such prejudices actually find expression.

To summarize what we have said:

1. The scientist, as such, has no right to pronounce upon the legitimacy of metaphysics (nor *a fortiori* of theology); he confines himself deliberately to the phenomenal aspect of objects.

2. In each particular science he makes use of the results of other empirical sciences, and professes the subordination of empirical science to logic and to mathematics.

3. On the other hand he refuses in advance and absolutely, in the name of empirical methodology, to recognize as an immediate datum of science, or as a scientific inference, any positive relationship whatsoever of objects to metaphysical realities.

4. This methodological exclusion of every experience, direct or indirect, of a transcendent reality is, at bottom, nothing more than a conventional *postulate* of modern science; its value is the same as that of the mathematical ideal of the latter, an ideal above all of a "regulatory" nature, incomparably fecund in the physical sciences, but of a less useful and more restricted application in the biological sciences, and of practically no utility in psychology.

5. Unless one erects into a dogma the assertion that every experience is virtually reducible to a mathematical expression, one must admit that the entire domain of human experience perhaps surpasses such an empirical domain as has been delimited by the theorists of modern science. This disjunction between *real experience* and *scientific experience* allows the scholar, in the psychology of mys-

ticism, not to be too much disturbed by certain vetoes pronounced *a priori* by reason of methodological conventions; the transcendent experience of the mystic may very well be real and humanly valid without being officially recognized by science. Moreover, I am not sure but that, if positive psychology, which succeeds only imperfectly in applying the directions of mathematical determinism, may not have more to gain in casting off this yoke and enlarging its object in the direction of the proper life of the mind. Would it then be in a position to welcome, without distortion, the testimony of the great mystics? We reserve this difficult problem to the second part of our study.

II

Assuming, by hypothesis, the existence of mystical experiences authentically supernatural, we must say that as such they belong above all to the domain of the theologian. In what measure do they nevertheless remain susceptible of psychological investigation?

In principle, this measure is that of the possible intervention of natural mechanisms in the midst of a total activity, mystical and supernatural in character. But how can one form a judgment of this in the abstract?

In reality, in the case of the great Catholic contemplatives themselves, mystical life taken in its entirety allows the psychologist a vast field of observation which no one will dispute. Outside a profound nucleus, very intimate and supernatural—which for the time being we reserve to the theologian—the mystical state presents superficial aspects less inaccessible; not only does the mystical state react upon the whole psychological and psycho-physiological organism but it depends on antecedents and produces effects which may be ascertained empirically. The cooperation of the psychologist is indispensable to the science of mysticism.

Should one desire, for example, to appraise in their concrete reality the extraordinary prayers of a contemplative, it is of some concern to know whether he lived in the fourth or in the twentieth century, in Europe or at the Antipodes, in the desert or in a city, at such or such a level in the social scale. It is of value, also, to inquire into his physical condition, his nervous reactions, his character, the education he has received and the many other influences that have affected him: relationships, spiritual direction, studies, reading. It is probable that the previous course of his psychological life will clarify many a detail in his mystical experiences. Shall we be able to isolate these mystical experiences, themselves partially accessible to our analysis, from their immediate surroundings which perhaps modify them and are in turn modified by them? The kind of life, lay or clerical, eremitical or conventual; the traditions belonging to the various religious congregations; the customary forms of worship; the interdependence more or less close between interior life and liturgical prayer; sometimes also, in accord with the diversity of times and places, the favorite subjects of pious iconography, the stereotyped forms of devout language, or even certain profane influences: artistic infatuations, symbolism that is in vogue, lyrical themes consecrated by usage—all these divers circumstances suffice to explain a multitude of features in the varied physiognomy of mysticism the most authentically supernatural.

If the principal element of supernatural mysticism—the divine contact—is not apparent to the ordinary person except through the testimony of the contemplative, this testimony itself whatever its form (communication during ecstasy, conferences with the spiritual director, accounts written after a longer or shorter interval) is bound to mingle some human interpretation with the initial mystical experience, and as a result becomes rightfully subject to the analysis of the historian and the psychologist collaborating with the theologian. In fine, the psychologist would still find a subject of study proportionate to his methodology in the individual and social effects of mystical graces, effects upon the moral and religious conduct of the mystic himself, reactions and judgments of witnesses, apostolic fruits immediate or deferred. If there are in these repercussions, at times quite extensive, of an interior and supernatural experience an aspect to which human science cannot attain because it depends on the providential distribution of grace, there are other aspects—for instance, the sympathetic chord struck even in the souls of untutored humanity by the example of "a man who has drawn near to God"—which more directly pertain to the object of collective psychology.

In regard to accessory phenomena, called *para-mystical* (sensible visions, interior words, clairvoyance, bodily insensibility, levitation, prolonged fast, stigmata, etc.), theologians are the first to seek an opinion from psychologists and physicians.

Does the immense field of investigation which the theologian voluntarily opens to the psychologist present a sufficient basis to constitute the psychology of mysticism an autonomous empirical science? One may object that the theologian has generously abandoned to psychology all that in the case of the mystic has no mystical character, that is to say psychological phenomena as commonly understood but designated "mystical" in reference to an internal and mysterious experience on the nature of which the psychologist is denied all means of pronouncing an opinion. Is this not equivalent to declaring a "psychology of mysticism" an illusion?

I admit that, for myself, I am not so certain that a psychology of mysticism ought at any cost to be complete without the collaboration of theology. But if some psychologist is convinced of the contrary, let us not grow angry at him. Let him be permitted to examine mystical experiences such as they are in themselves. Let him adventure as far as he can, only making sure that he applies in all sincerity the empirical methodology of the sciences. He will soon perceive that the psychology of mysticism, if it is a science, is not a science like the other sciences. In a normally constituted science it ought always be possible, after accord has been reached on the facts ascertained, to make a report of divergent views in the form of theoretical interpretations. In the matter under discussion the verification of the most characteristic facts,

whether one wishes it or not, appears subordinated to previous theoretical preferences.

In an attempt to clarify this problem we shall proceed to classify in a progressive order the principal difficulties which the observation of mystical phenomena presents to the psychologist:

1. Some difficulties, however imposing they may seem, are nevertheless surmountable. There is the difficulty of reconstituting the immediate environment in which the mystic lived. How few psychologists, alas, know exactly what are the customary surroundings of a Christian family, a religious community, a center of apostolic activities! There is the difficulty of understanding the theological doctrines with which a life of prayer is imbued in all its degrees; the difficulty of comprehending the nuances of terminology, technical and conventional or spontaneous, employed by the contemplative; the difficulty of creating within oneself by systematic effort an intellectual sympathy sufficient to divine, through words, the condition of a soul. In the case of many authors the chief obstacle to this clear-sighted sympathy appears to be less a lack of good will than a lack of information, a defect which at times attains bewildering proportions. Moreover, since the sources of information in the study of the great mystics are for the most part historical and literary, the aforesaid difficulties are augmented by the indispensable need of the criticism of documents. For this the psychologist is dependent upon the historian, and one would deceive himself in thinking that the former will invariably discover that the latter has already sifted and prepared the material. The precise opposite is often the case.

2. Another difficulty arises from the inevitable use of the introspective method. I say "inevitable" because in the study of mystics a behaviorist psychology would certainly not avail much. One is reminded of the old dispute concerning the possibility of psychology being a science, or again of the more recent debate concerning the scientific value of the "method of provoked introspection," called the Würzburg method. Among the reasons which caution hesitation in ranging psychology among the positive sciences not the least is the danger of modification to which introspection unavoidably exposes its object. When it is concomitant, voluntary introspection divides attention and interferes with the spontaneous activity of the mind. On the other hand when it is consequent—when it is nothing more than an attentive remembrance—it presents the antecedent phenomenon under a new aspect, it reveals a phenomenon more or less like the original but, in reality, different.

In any event mystical experience, in what concerns its most intimate and divine functions, is hardly compatible with a simultaneous effort to observe its beginnings and to analyze its phases. This reflective effort would appear to Christians to be something of a lack of reverence, even supposing that it were possible without immediately distorting its object. The psychology of mysticism, therefore, relies on the remembrance, more or less proximate, of the experience it studies. Add the fact that the psychologist is not, himself, the real observer but depends upon the testimony of others and one becomes involved in new complications. To formulate his evidence the mystic is constrained to translate an internal experience, simple and extremely emotional in nature, into separate concepts of a fragmentary and generally impersonal character—a translation always imperfect, in which the intelligence is dependent in a great degree upon the more or less acute powers of divination exercised by psychology itself.

3. The impossibility of re-enacting a mystical experience, and the uniqueness of the witness of this event would seem to be irremediable obstacles to "scientific" verification.

What is the value in the sciences of an unique observation? Normally a scientific fact ought to be controllable, and for that, if it is not subject to experimentation in the strict sense of the word, it can, at least, be observed by anyone who puts himself in the required conditions. It happens, nevertheless, that a fact is accepted as scientific before it has been effectively subjected to control on the part of several observers, for example, when the theoretical anticipations, the demonstrated perfection of the techniques employed, the exceptional credit of the experimentator give the new fact a probability which dispenses with an immediate verification. This is especially true when the fitting up of experiments necessary for the purpose is exceptionally expensive or intricate. In some groups of sciences, such as particularly the descriptive parts of biology, the confirmation of unique observations is relatively frequent. But, in every case, whether *controlled* or not the scientific fact ought to be *controllable*.

Strictly personal and incommunicable, mystical experience is by its very nature not subject to this kind of control. Let no one here point to the infallibility of the "techniques of ecstasy." In the superior forms of mysticism these techniques either do not exist (orthodox Christian mysticism) or, at best, where they exist (heretodox Christian mysticism, Moslem mysticism, Neo-Platonism), they are regarded only as indirect preparations without positive efficacy. In the hypothesis of a genuine supernatural mystic, the impossibility of re-enacting for the purpose of verification the transcendent experience is still more out of the question.[2]

As a consequence the psychology of mysticism relies, for its essential data, upon the testimony of isolated witnesses in respect to facts which are, themselves, uncontrollable. The only possible analysis of these facts—indirect analysis and never fully decisive—will have to do with the sincerity and perspicacity of the witnesses. As a rule no doubt arises as to the sincerity of the mystic. His intelligence and the habitual reliability of his judgment may be seen in the details of his ordinary conduct. What can be concluded from this? Only that his error, when he makes a mistake, will be such as to cast no discredit upon an honest mind, a sincere heart. This is a good deal, to be sure, but it is far from being a scientific proof that the mystic is not laboring under a delusion.

4. We come, finally, to the principal obstacle which

mystical experience presents to the psychologist, namely the fact that this experience is essentially objective. I want to speak not only in the generic sense, in which Scheler understands it, of the "intentionality" (i. e. of the objective signification) which pertains to every "religious experience," but of an intentionality, properly *intuitive*, of an *immediate* apprehension of the object, in short of that consciousness of *experience* which causes the mystic to say later: "I saw," "I touched," rather than "I know," "I believe," or "I infer."

Let us suppose that the mystic has exactly expressed what he has experienced. In such a case what attitudes remain legitimate on the part of the psychologist?

He can, by deliberately prescinding from all objective value of intentionality, consider the mystical experience as a subjective state in regard to which a sole question of frontiers interests him. Is the ensemble of observable characteristics of this state susceptible or not of psychological explanation? In the event of a negative answer (supposing such an answer, depending on credence in mystical documents alone, ever becomes imperative), the rôle of the psychologist ought incontestably to limit him to recording the exceptional phenomena which one describes to him, and to affirming his own incapacity of giving them a scientific interpretation. To go farther would be to usurp the province of the philosopher or of the theologian.

A similar manner of presenting, if not of resolving, the problem of the causes of the mystical state occurs in rare texts of spiritual writers who occasionally describe the inroads of the divine during ecstasy, not as the content of an immediate experience, but as the only possible interpretation of an exceptional subjective condition. Generalized in the form of a methodological principle, this distinction between the *subjective experience* and the *interpretation* which the subject reports of it, easily conduces (such was the case in "comparative mysticism") to regarding every consciousness of a transcendent presence as a *secondary* psychological elaboration produced by the domination of doctrinal preconceptions (true or false; positive science has no obligation to determine which).

What are we to think of this methodological attitude which appears to have the advantage of preventing every conflict of rival jurisdictions?

I should willingly reply by another question on which depends, in fact, the legitimacy of a genuine empirical science of mysticism. Does the distinction between the experimental fact and its causal interpretation fairly represent the immediate content of the consciousness of the mystic, particularly in the case of the great Christian contemplatives? It must be observed that this distinction, if generalized, would distort the literal testimony of the most reliable original witnesses and, in consequence, impair the value of the only documents we possess of mystical experience.

What do these documents recount when they describe the heights of the mystical states? Almost always they report a simple apprehension of the divine, a direct experience of a transcendent object, something extraordinary and ineffable which unites subject and object in a mutual exchange of gifts. Have I the right, as a psychologist, to proceed as if my initial data, covered by the testimony of the mystic, were not a simple objective experience but a consecutive activity, consisting of two intervals: the experience of a subjective state, and subsequently its objective interpretation? Would not such a procedure falsify the initial data of the mystical problem by substituting my own personal interpretation for the state of soul which the mystic declares to have *experienced*?

On the other hand, however original it may be, the objective signification of mystical experience can be illusory, or it can be genuine. The mystic regards it as genuine; as a psychologist I am not obliged to accept his testimony. But what then?

To take note of the affirmation of the mystic without directly or indirectly passing judgment on the nature of the experience in question would be to renounce a psychology of "mystical experience." If this renunciation is disallowed, as a psychologist I am constrained to a choice which psychology cannot realize: either, in accord with my documents I recognize in the mystical experience a genuine intellectual intuition of a transcendent object, or I declare this appearance of transcendent intuition, however irrepressible, to be, in the case of the mystic, an illusion. In the first instance I cross the threshold of metaphysics and theology—it is my privilege, but have I not ceased to be a psychologist? In the second instance, unless I furnish a satisfactory empirical explanation of the illusion of mystics (it is patent that the explanation already given is defective), I should not know how to justify my choice except by invoking reasons foreign to psychology, for example by denying *a priori* the possibility of a transcendent intuition.

This whole discussion may be epitomized in a formula which, although expressed some thirty years ago, is none the less exact: In the psychology of the great Christian contemplatives "phenomenology, itself, imposes an ontological choice."

An ontological choice, to be sure. But will the psychologist have decisive extra-psychological reasons to choose in one way rather than in another? Materialistic or sensualistic metaphysics rules out absolutely and in advance every transcendent interpretation; but spiritualistic metaphysics and even Christian theology are far from resolutely imposing this transcendent interpretation. They supply general presumptions which, in particular instances, may become extremely persuasive but not, however, compelling. Even the approval of the Church given to private revelations does not exact in their favor on the part of the faithful anything more than a prudent and respectful attitude, never an assent of divine faith. The Catholic psychologist who admits the possibility of supernatural mystical graces enjoys therefore the largest liberty of determination in every concrete case submitted to his scrutiny. Better than the unbeliever he will have an opportunity of

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Human Desire and the Vision of God in St. Thomas

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CHRISTIAN life in its entirety is based on faith in man's elevation to a supernatural destiny. According to the Church's teaching, this destiny consists in the vision of God, the direct intuition of the Divine Essence, in which man is to find the supreme perfection of his nature as well as his complete happiness.

This supernatural perfection, precisely because it is supernatural, essentially surpasses all the active and meritorious capacities of our unaided nature. That is why this perfection is a gift of God, as is the supernatural grace which enables us to attain to it; a gratuitous gift implying no demand of any sort in our nature.

None the less, man is not free to refuse this gratuitous gift, the while contenting himself with the natural perfection corresponding to the essential demands of his nature. Man must necessarily accept it if he would not irremediably jeopardize his eternal destiny. There is now but one salvation, but one last end, for all men, be they Christians, pagans, Jews, or schismatics. That end is the supernatural one.

Such are the root points of Catholic teaching regarding the question we wish to examine in this article.[1] The problem is this: what is the natural disposition of man with respect to his supernatural end? Is there in man's nature considered absolutely, that is, according to its essential makeup, a natural desire for this supernatural perfection which is not only offered, but in a certain sense, imposed upon him by God, since without it man cannot help but be eternally unhappy.

Importance of question: difficulties

At first sight this question may appear futile and of little moment. What interest, indeed, can there be in knowing whether man, taken in his natural condition, that is, taken in a state of nature which has never existed, would have been capable of desiring to see God.

This is not, however, the real meaning of the problem. A detail so unimportant in itself would certainly not have held the attention of theologians for centuries past, did not the solution arrived at have the very greatest consequences in the field of doctrine. As a matter of fact, nothing less than the meaning of the connection between the natural and the supernatural is at stake here. If supernatural beatitude is really man's supreme good, must it not answer to the most profound desire of his nature? Can any one imagine a being that would be naturally indifferent to what constitutes its highest perfection? How could this perfection be even a good for such a being, if the being in no way desired it? And how could we ever establish that man must prefer this supernatural good, which has no natural attraction for him, to his natural perfection, towards which he is borne with all his being? Can we admit that God imposes this supernatural perfection on man without taking into account his natural dispositions? In that case, would not God be doing violence to human nature?

On the other hand, if the Beatific Vision corresponds to a necessary desire of our nature, does not such a desire connote a demand for the supernatural? Such an urge, it seems, can only be the expression of the finality of human nature, that is, of the last term to which that nature necessarily tends in the whole exercise of its activity; as a consequence, man's nature has to be able to attain to such a term, or all its efforts will be in vain. But if the Beatific Vision is so desired, the practical possibility of attaining to it is due to man's nature, and by that very fact the end ceases to be a supernatural one; its transcendent and gratuitous character are seen to be irremediably compromised.

At first sight, then, it would seem that both sides present insurmountable difficulties. Either man has a natural desire to see God, and then we must answer the question: why is not the Beatific Vision necessarily required? Or, man has not a natural desire to see God, and then the Beatific Vision becomes something added on, something extrinsic, having no natural interest for man.

These, then, are the points at issue; this is the real meaning of the problem under examination. In the last analysis it is a question of seeking to determine the manner of insertion of the supernatural into man's nature, the significance that the supernatural necessarily has for him. And so this question of the natural desire to see God is one of the most fundamental as well as one of the most difficult in the whole of Christian philosophy, one, too, which calls into play, first, the psychology of human activity, even considered from a purely rational point of view, for human action cannot entirely abstract from the possibility of the supernatural; and secondly, as one may easily see, theology, in so far as the solution implies the determination of the connection between the natural and the supernatural.

St. Thomas' position

It is easy for us to understand that in a matter so important and difficult Catholic philosophers and theologians should have been particularly interested in the opinion of St. Thomas. What is his reply to our question?

First, let us note that St. Thomas was not unaware of the existence of this problem; on the contrary, it is one of those to which he most frequently returned, and one with which he deals in all his great works.[2] At least at first sight the solution he proposes seems to be the clearest and the most explicit possible. He distinctly affirms the presence in human nature, as in every spiritual nature, of

a natural desire for the sight of God. Let us quote at least the beginning of Chapter LI, Book III of the *Contra Gentiles* where St. Thomas states his thesis in perfectly lucid terms:

> Since then it is impossible for a natural desire to be void;—and it would be were it impossible to arrive at understanding the divine substance; for all minds desire this naturally:—we must conclude that it is possible for the divine substance to be seen by means of the intellect, . . .[3]

St. Thomas' argument, which is always the same, can be summarized thus: the desire to see God is manifested in the spiritual being as the immediate expression of a desire that does not accidentally arise within him but which has its roots in his very nature: the desire to know everything according to its essence. This desire has its immediate origin in the very nature of the spiritual being, which, as such, is ordained to the cognition of objects as beings, that is, according to what they are in themselves, absolutely, according to their essence. As a consequence the spiritual being cannot be satisfied, if, knowing of an object's existence, he does not arrive at a knowledge of its very nature. And so, aware of the existence of God, the spiritual being will naturally desire to know Him according to His Essence, as He is in Himself, according to His own form, *per formam propriam,* and not simply in an analogical manner, *per formam alienam.* The spiritual being, then, naturally desires the direct cognition of God, the intuitive vision of His Essence; his beatitude cannot be perfect if this desire be not satisfied.

This is St. Thomas' reply to our present question. The conclusion he draws from his reasoning is that it is not impossible for man to attain to the Beatific Vision, for a desire cannot be in vain, that is, cannot have as its object something to which it cannot attain.

At first sight this conclusion may appear rather timid. After seeing the reasons adduced by St. Thomas one would naturally expect him to conclude, not to the simple possibility, but to the necessity of man's seeing God, since beatitude is impossible without such a vision, and the spiritual being necessarily desires its beatitude. This was Baius' and the Jansenists' interpretation of St. Thomas' argumentation. From it they concluded that the Beatific Vision was naturally due to man and consequently had to be called natural.

But such is not the meaning of St. Thomas' conclusions. Far from it. We might say that no one is more scrupulous than he in distinguishing the natural from the supernatural and in affirming the complete transcendency of the latter.

> The end toward which all created things are directed by God is twofold; one which exceeds all proportion and faculty of created nature; and this end is life eternal, that consists in seeing God which is above the nature of every creature, . . . The other end however, is proportionate to created nature, to which end created being can attain according to the power of its nature.[4]

And in the *De Veritate* he characterizes the supernatural good as follows: it is that

> good of man which transcends the proportion of human nature because natural powers are not sufficient to secure it, nor to think of it, nor to desire it. Only by the Liberality of God is it given.[5]

These texts chosen from among many other similar ones are quite clear, and more than sufficiently show that according to St. Thomas the desire of seeing God by no means implies a natural demand for supernatural beatitude.

If St. Thomas in the texts with which we are here concerned does not explicitly recall to mind this aspect of the desire to see God the reason is that he did not have in mind those who, like the Jansenists and Modernists, exaggerated the import of this natural desire, but rather those who followed Alexander of Aphrodisius in making man's beatitude consist either in scientific knowledge or in union with a universal *intellectus agens* or with separated substances. Of such opinions were certain Jewish and Arabian philosophers; some theologians like Abelard and others of the Schoolmen, asserted that a creature could only attain to God in His effects and not directly to Him as He is in Himself. Hence we can understand why St. Thomas, face to face with this kind of opposition, principally emphasized in stating his position reasons taken from faith and philosophy which were at variance with these men's erroneous opinion; why too he did not take the trouble to go more into detail and render more explicit his position with regard to the opposite error. He would most certainly have done so had he envisaged this question, as we must, after the mistaken doctrines of Jansenism and after all the discussion that the problem has stirred up from the 16th century up to these last few years. It can, therefore, be said that from this point of view the mind of St. Thomas is not entirely specific nor clear to us. Consequently there need be no cause for astonishment that his assertions, apparently so firm, should have given rise to interpretations so different from one another, interpretations which, whether we like it or not, must be accounted for by prepossessions which were not those of St. Thomas. We must admit that his position respecting the natural desire of seeing God is not quite clear or explicit. In making it so it is all-important that we remain faithful to his thought as expressed elsewhere in his works, particularly to his notion of the psychology of human desire. Regarding this conception he has left us principles and expositions than which nothing could be more clear and decisive.

The essence of desire according to St. Thomas

Before beginning an explanation of the various interpretations of St. Thomas' view on the natural desire of seeing God it is important that for the sake of clarity in our discussion we should first briefly recall the Thomistic doctrine on desire in general.

St. Thomas and the Schoolmen consider desire and appetite as being essentially an inclination of a being towards its good, *towards that which is suitable to it,* namely, its perfection *(in id quod est ei conveniens). Every being seeks its own perfection (unumquodque appetit suam perfectionem).*[6] This inclination always follows upon a form, upon a mode of existence. *Quamlibet formam sequitur aliqua inclinatio.*[7] This is an inchoatively perfect form, one which tends towards its full perfection. Appetite or desire is precisely the tendency which moves a being towards its perfection.

The form which is the principle of desire, can be either a real form, physically actualized in the order of existing

things, or an intentional or mental form, one conceived by the mind, the representation of a manner of being in thought.[8]

The inclination, the motion consequent to it, which does not presuppose in the being moved a representation of that toward which it is tending, constitutes what the Schoolmen call appetite or inborn desire, *appetitus innatus*,[9] a movement received or produced in the subject's nature by the Author of Nature, and directed by Him to its end, an end that is always real.[10] This movement in which the inborn appetite consists, though always in act, is not, however, the act of an operative potency or of an appetitive faculty, but works, to use the Schoolmen's figure of speech, somewhat after the manner of a *pondus naturae* which is not something distinct from the nature of a being and which moves nature just as gravity exerts a pull on heavy bodies.

Contrariwise, the inclination following upon an intentional form, upon the representation of the term to which it tends, is exercised by an operative potency distinct from nature. The will is such a potency; its exercise not being naturally determined requires a specifying principle which is precisely the intentional form, the representation of the desired object. The Schoolmen usually call this second type of inclination or appetite merely appetite or *elicited desire*. It constitutes, as the word itself indicates, an act elicited by the appetitive faculty or rather by the subject in which this faculty is to be found.[11]

Taking another viewpoint, appetite is again divided into natural and deliberate or elective appetite.

Natural appetite, as the name itself signifies, is that which proceeds from nature, and which has its foundation in nature. This is certainly the first meaning of this word as used by St. Thomas, who thereby designates not only inborn appetite, which is clearly natural, but also a form of elicited appetite the determining principle of which is not an acquired knowledge of the good desired, but a natural knowledge, therefore a knowledge in a certain manner inborn; not indeed under the form of an actually present knowledge, but *per modum habitus*, as the Schoolmen say, that is, like a natural disposition passing necessarily into act in every one of the mind's activities. It is quite evident that a desire of this character, found ready-made in the appetitive faculty, is a necessary desire, and one which will inevitably find expression, more or less explicitly, in every activity of the appetitive faculty of which it is the first form, the first act, and the expression of finality. Such, for example, according to St. Thomas is the desire of the last end.[12]

In a derived and not so strict a sense the Schoolmen apply the term natural to a desire which follows upon acquired knowledge, but a desire which is necessarily bound up with a natural wish or desire in the strict sense. An instance of this, according to St. Thomas, would be the desire for God on the part of one who would know for certain that God is the Sovereign Good.[13] In this case the object would be necessarily desired, at least *necessitate specificationis*, to use the Scholastic terminology, meaning that the subject of the desire, after learning the nature of the object, could not reject the same; but as he still remains free to consider or not to consider this object, he is likewise free to desire or not to desire it. In this fashion his will remains free at least as regards its exercise.

The Schoolmen distinguish between a natural or necessary act of the will and the elective act which has for its object something in regard to which the will determines itself both with respect to its specification and to its exercise. This is the deliberate act of the will.

In the light of these clarifying observations we are in a better position to understand the different interpretations given by commentators on St. Thomas to what he has to say on the subject of the natural desire for the sight of God.

St. Thomas' opinion on the natural desire of seeing God as understood by his commentators

Few points of St. Thomas' teaching have given rise to as many widely differing explanations as this matter of the natural desire for the sight of God. Even those usually considered as the most trustworthy representatives of Thomistic orthodoxy are at variance with one another regarding the meaning and exact import of the texts which confront us. "Ambiguity is not wanting in them," says Cajetan.[14] And Sylvester of Ferrara: "A very difficult question arises as to how the desire of seeing the Divine Essence can be called natural."[15] Moreover their hesitancy is obvious as they set forth their interpretations: "It could be said that the author treats of man as a theologian would" *(Dici posset quod auctor tractat de homine ut theologus)*, is Cajetan's hint; all Sylvester has to say is: "With due respect to better judgment than mine" *(salvo meliori judicio)*.

It is well to note that the great majority of these interpretations seem to agree in their efforts to restrict the natural import of the Angelic Doctor's assertions. This ought not to cause astonishment, if we note, as we have already done above, the difference in viewpoints taken by St. Thomas and his commentators from the 16th century onwards.

The most important of these interpretations might be classified as follows: first, the great majority, those who reject every kind of inborn desire, holding that it was St. Thomas' intention to deal only with natural elicited desire, that is to say, a desire consequent on the cognition of its object. Some of these take this natural desire to mean desire in the strict, others, desire in the derived sense. These last are again subdivided into those for whom there is question only of a conditional and uncertain desire, and those who maintain it is a firm and absolute desire, founded, according to Ferrara, on human nature taken absolutely; in Cajetan's opinion, on the contrary, it presupposes man's elevation to his supernatural destiny. Lastly there are some who, with Dominic Soto, are of the view that the natural desire of which St. Thomas speaks is only a subsequent and necessarily dependent expression of certain accidental conditions.

All the great commentators, Cajetan, Ferrara, Bañez, John of St. Thomas, believe that the desire of which the

Angelic Doctor writes presupposes the knowledge of God. This is an acquired knowledge, not a natural one. According to them the desire for the sight of God is "a contingent desire, conditioned not alone by nature, but by the free development of conscious activity, and by the previous acquisition of certain knowledge that is not innate."[16] It is, however, a natural desire in the restricted sense because it is necessarily connected with a natural desire to know the essences of things, which latter is a natural desire in the strict sense. Once God's existence is known, the desire to know Him in His Essence must necessarily be awakened in man's consciousness in view of the nature of his cognitive faculties.

But under what conditions may we consider this spontaneous and clearly necessary desire (at least a subjectively necessary one) as the expression of a real natural desire, and therefore one possessing objective necessity rooted in man's very nature? For here lies the great difference between a natural desire in the strict sense of the word, and every other kind of elicited desire; the first is the expression of a natural necessity, its term having always an objective value, while the second expresses a reaction of the subject in the presence of a good it has conceived and which is not necessarily a real or even a possible good. The interpreters of St. Thomas just mentioned disagree, then, upon the real import of this spontaneous desire for the sight of God, and upon the conditions of its significance as a natural desire.

Cajetan says that this desire is really natural, really connected in objective fashion with the desire of knowing, only in the hypothesis of man's elevation to his supernatural end. The reason he gives is that man's natural desire "cannot extend beyond the active capacities of his nature." "Nature gives no inclination to which the complete power of nature cannot attain."[17] According to the same writer the desire of seeing God is, at least insofar as it is a natural desire, dependent on the ordering of human nature to its ultimate supernatural good; only in this hypothesis is there question of a real, natural, objectively necessary desire; a desire that is supernatural as regards its object, but natural as to its mode. Because man is already directed towards his supernatural end his desire necessarily aims at that end.

The weight of the reasons supporting Cajetan's restrictions can hardly be questioned. It does seem, however, that the conclusions he draws from them are less far-reaching than those of St. Thomas. The latter asserts that there is certainly in human nature, independent of man's elevation to his supernatural destiny, a desire for the sight of his Creator.

That is why Sylvester of Ferrara parts company with his brother philosopher and proposes another interpretation.[18] According to him the desire of seeing God is founded on human nature considered absolutely, that is, according to its essential conditions; the desire of seeing God proceeds from the natural desire to know, which last desire is implanted in human nature independently of its elevation to the supernatural order. In answer to Cajetan's objection that in that case man would necessarily desire his supernatural end, he makes his position clearer by saying that the term of this desire is not that vision which constitutes the sovereign good and the object of supernatural beatitude, but a knowledge of the First Cause as He is in Himself, though in this desire the mode of this knowledge and the conditions into which it might resolve itself are left undetermined *(quomodocumque eius essentia videatur)*. He further remarks that there is question only of a simple desire, and by no means of an intention or of an efficacious desire of this object which would tend toward the object as towards an end, which intention or efficacious desire could not but be of a supernatural character.

But how could a desire of this kind, the simple affective disposition of the will, anterior to every reflection on its object's possibility, be sure of itself, sure of its object's possibility, sure of being something more than a pleasant dream or chimaera? This is the objection that, in company with Bañez, we could adduce against Ferrara's position. It is certain that man naturally, that is, spontaneously, without reasoning, desires to know the essence of all things. This desire is truly natural where there is question of objects which he can know and which are proportioned to his capacity for knowledge. It is likewise clear that man's capacity for knowledge must, in a certain manner, extend to all being, for it is impossible objectively to know any object whatever, except in its connection with the complexus of being of which it must necessarily form a part. Thus it is that the cognition of any object whatsoever necessarily implies the cognition of God. But, reasoning from that point, can we with certitude conclude that man, too, must, in a certain manner, be capable of knowing each being, each object, according to its own form? From the simple verification of the existence of this spontaneous desire of knowing God just as He is in Himself, can we conclude with certainty to the existence of a proportion, were it only a far-fetched and radical one, between human intelligence and the Divine Essence, especially since according to St. Thomas, spontaneous, unreasoned desire can have as its object the possible as well as the impossible and even the chimerical?[19] For example, could not the desire of knowing God in a comprehensive manner, that is to say, as perfectly as God knows Himself, also arise in this same manner in the human will, unaware of the radical impossibility of this desire?

The position of Bañez admitting certainly, the existence of this kind of natural desire of seeing God, though as an uncertain desire, not possessing in itself the certitude of its object's existence, thus becomes understandable. He would have us believe in a desire which, at first sight, may assuredly appear as absolute in its spontaneity, but which when reasoned out always connotes at least an implicit condition; if that be possible!

The fact of the matter is that in order for a desire consequent on acquired knowledge to be truly a natural desire its object must first appear, and appear evidently, as objectively connected with the object of a natural

desire in the strict sense; otherwise what assurance can we have of the real validity of such an object? Accordingly, a desire of this kind, far from being the basis of its object's intrinsic possibility, supposes it as previously established.

Moreover, we must also note that such a desire, even if we suppose it to have objective foundation, has not that universality which St. Thomas does indeed seem to attribute to the natural desire of seeing God as God Himself intends; on the contrary this acquired desire is dependent on a certain contingent knowledge which, there is every reason to believe, is not had by all men.

Now we can understand why some Schoolmen should have taken the desire of seeing God, of which St. Thomas speaks, as a natural desire in the strict sense, that is, as proceeding not from acquired knowledge but from man's very nature, and determined within his nature by God Himself; consequently, it is necessarily found in every man.

Some there are who think that this natural desire of seeing God can only be an elicited desire, one, therefore, which supposes a certain implicit and natural knowledge of its object, though not, assuredly a distinct and explicit knowledge of the same. This desire is none other than the very desire itself of beatitude, the natural and primary object of the volitional faculty, insofar as this beatitude can only be achieved by the sight of God. And, so in every exercise of his will man vaguely but necessarily desires the sight of God; not, as is evident, with an efficacious desire, which desire connotes the natural capacity of attaining the good desired or even the wish to obtain it. This natural desire for the sight of God is simply a natural velleity whose term, none the less, is the ultimate supernatural good. We cannot, therefore, conclude from the necessity of such a desire to man's being naturally destined to a good so desired, but only to the necessary possibility of this good and of the conditions under which it may be attained.

This is the position of Father de Broglie and of Father O'Mahony. There are between these two men's opinions certain noteworthy differences, however; the latter dissociates man's finality from his active capacities for realizing his end, while Father de Broglie admits man's "finalization" towards an ultimate natural good proportioned to the active capacities of his nature.

This interpretation certainly accounts better than the preceding ones for St. Thomas' strong assertions regarding the natural character and universality in spiritual beings of the desire of seeing God. But the interpretation is not without its difficulties. The desire for beatitude, it is said, is an implicit desire for the sight of God because reason bears witness that the spiritual being can find its perfect beatitude only in this end. Is it quite evident and would St. Thomas himself admit that unaided reason can arrive at this certitude? Then, too, without going so far as to separate in voluntary activity the order of finality from the order of activity and the realization, how far can we go in dissociating desire from finality, particularly natural desire in the strict sense of the word?

Lastly, there are some who maintain that the natural desire to see God which St. Thomas had in mind, and of which he speaks, is not an elicited, but an inborn desire, the elicited desire of which is only a contingent expression dependent on certain particular conditions. As a matter of fact the reason is that the elicited desire, insofar as it is a determined inclination, is the act of an appetitive potency exercised only through the medium of cognition of its object and of which this knowledge is the determining principle. The elicited desire, then, supposes a potency which, considered in itself, can only be a movement which does not follow upon knowledge, a motion, consequently, which is inborn and received, caused by God in man's nature, and constituting the will as a potency, as a *virtus volendi.* This motion, as is true of every innate motion, must be directed to a real end; and this end can only be God Himself, the principle and term of the nature of the being and of its will.

We must not, however, conceive this accepted motion as similar to the inborn appetite of inferior beings, that is, as "finalizing" the exercise of the being's activity according to a determinism which, far from serving as a basis for the exercise of the free will, would, on the contrary be its negation. As we shall further on explain in the second part of this article this inborn motion which constitutes the will as human nature's appetitive potency, and which, taken in itself, is a movement towards God as He is in Himself, is translated into the exercise of the will only consequent upon and proportioned to the cognition of its object, therefore according to the elicited exercise of the volitive faculty, and to the extent in which the willing subject is capable of knowing this object.

This does, indeed, seem to be the mind of St. Thomas regarding the natural desire for the sight of God. According to the Angelic Doctor this desire, considered in its essence, is not an act of the will, but a natural inclination which he clearly differentiates from every actual exercise of the will. That is what appears from the comparison of two passages from his works in which he studies the manner in which the souls of infants who have died without Baptism can desire the sight of God; it is his intention, then, to consider this desire only according to the possibilities of human nature taken absolutely. In the first of these two passages[20] which belongs to the first years of his teaching (1254-1256), he grants that the desire to see God is an elicited desire which presupposes the knowledge of its object's possibility. In another place[21] written about ten years later (1263-1268) he rejects this first explanation and adopts another according to which the desire these souls have of seeing God is not an elicited desire, *voluntas actualis,* but a simple natural inclination, *inclinatio naturalis,* compatible with lack of knowledge of the object, and in opposition to the elicited desire.[22]

We shall give a more detailed explanation of this interpretation in a forthcoming article.

(To be continued in the January number)

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2. See *S. T.* Ia, 12, 1; Ia IIae, 3, 8; *Sum. c. Gent.* III, 50, 51; *De Malo* V, 8; *Comp. Theol.* 104, 106; 2 *Sent.* XXXII, 2, 2; 4 *Sent.* XLIX, 1, 3.

3. *Sum. c. Gent.* 51 *"Cum autem impossibile sit naturale desiderium esse inane, quod quidem esset, si non esset possible pervenire ad divinam substantiam intelligendam, quod naturaliter omnes mentes desiderant, necesse est dicere quod possibile est substantiam Dei videri per intellectum creatum, . . .*

4. *S. T.* Ia, 23, 1 *"Finis ad quem res creatae ordinantur a Deo est duplex; unus qui excedit proportionem naturae et facultatem, et hic finis est vita aeterna quae in divina visione consistit, quae est supra naturam cujuslibet creaturae. Alius autem finis est naturae creatae proportionatus, quem scilicet res creata potest attingere secundum virtutem suae naturae."*

5. *De Ver.* XIV, 2 *"Bonum hominis naturae humanae proportionem excedens, quia ad ipsum obtinendum vires naturales non sufficiunt, nec ad cogitandum vel desiderandum, sed ex sola divina liberalitate repromittitur."*

6. *S. T.* Ia, 6, 1; Ia IIae, 8, 1.

7. *S. T.* Ia, 80, 1.

8. *S. T.* Ia, 19, 1; Ia, 59, 1; 60, 1; 80, 1; Ia IIae, 8, 1; 17, 8; 26, 1; etc.

9. St. Thomas does not use the term *appetitus innatus*, but designates that form of appetite by the name *appetitus naturalis*. See especially *S. T.* Ia, 19, 1 and Ia, 59, 1.

10. *S. T.* Ia IIae, 8, 1, c.

11. In St. Thomas that form of appetite is called *appetitus animalis vel intellectivus.*

12. See *S. T.* Ia IIae, 63, 1; 2 *Sent.* XXXIX, 2, 2, 2; *De Ver.* XXII, 7 and 8. Also 5.

13. *S. T.* Ia, 82, 2.

14. *In Summam* Ia IIae, 3, 8.

15. *In Sum. c. Gent.* III, 51 *"Dubium difficile insurgit quomodo desiderium videndi divinam substantiam dici possit naturale."*

16. See *Bulletin Thomiste* III, 663.

17. *In Summam* Ia, 12, 1 *"Non se extendit ultra naturae facultates,"*; and *"Natura non largitur inclinationem in aliquid ad quod tota vis naturae perducere nequit."*

18. *In Sum. c. Gent.* III, 51.

19. See *De Malo* XVI, 3 ad 9; *In Ethic.* III, 5; 2 *Sent.* XXX, 1, 1, ad 6.

20. 2 *Sent.* XXXIII, 2, 2.

21. *De Malo* V, 3.

22. For an exegesis of these two passages of St. Thomas, see Ed. Brisbois, "Desir naturel et vision de Dieu," *Nouvelle Revue Théologique*, February, 1927.

Plato and the Absolute State

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IT IS certain that the next generation will live through some great crisis in the story of the relations between the state and the individual. It will be difficult in the extreme for the strong socializing instincts of our time, already so violently accumulated in Communism and Fascism, to avoid the formation of political systems with little or no respect for the Christian concept of personality. Perhaps it is only on a higher plane that the group and the person can ever perfectly adjust their demands. History tells us clearly enough that on the purely natural plane a perfect balance has not been maintained. Yet both the historian and the philosopher can contribute to a final solution by frequent and courageous criticism of the metaphysics of dangerous political forms. Directly or indirectly both are burdened with the responsibility of propagating healthy political concepts. And in this we might well learn much from the great propagandizing power of the Soviet that began by intellectualizing itself with the metaphysics of Marx and has continued its campaign by corraling such unique figures as Gerard Manley Hopkins and Plato. This paper for its part takes its excuse from the fact that there is some need of clarifying the position that Plato is the first great apostle of the absolute state.

The facts from which the "problem" rises seem to be very simple. It is hard to discover one who has preached a more rigorous type of communism than the founder of the Academy did in the fifth book of the *Republic*. A mild way of passing over the difficulty of this demand not only for a community of goods but of wives and children as well is to call it one of the few aberrations of a great mind. Does the whole texture of the *Republic* make possible any more pleasant qualifications? Well, substantially it represents a doctrine of extreme specialization by the individual worker in the interest of the common good and apparently his place is to be determined by the requirements of a very mathematically constructed social pattern. The control of poetry and the arts would seem to be but a minor item in the activity of an absolute power. Does not Plato turn his back completely on the Periclean ideals of Athenian civilization? But if one wants to see the picture of Platonic aberration pushed to monstrous proportions he may read with as much patience as he can the recent summary of Warner Fite in *The Platonic Legend*.[1]

To all this there are a number of possible answers. The first that suggests itself, that Plato was not here primarily outlining a political philosophy but was using the figure of the state as a great rhetorical device[2] making possible a deeper penetration into its lesser counterpart, the human soul, is too simple a solution. It is very true that, in order to catch some vision of the beauty of order among all the elements of the soul under the domination of reason, Plato in the larger analogue of the state pushed the logic of orderliness under the domination of the philosophic ruler to an extreme. Here then is some explanation of an absolute government, a rigorous division of the groups in the city, and the specialization of function for the individual: We are asked not to criticize too severely the literary machinery of a great genius in his attempt to create the material for an intuiting of what true interior spiritual beauty means. Unfortunately however, any one who is at all aware of the intense social purposes of both Plato and the Academy will hesitate to say that he is not here delivering himself very seriously of his own political views. Moreover, it is essential to understand that for the Greek no picture of man was complete outside of his life in the community. There alone is he living a full life. It is no mere accident of an aristocratic art, for example, that the Greek tragedians wrote in terms, never of an inner spiritual

tragedy of the soul alone, but always of the fall of great personages whose story contained far more tragic implications from its involving a social background and therefore a national disaster. After all there is something wrong not so much with the individual as with the race, and it is in the giant sweeps of history that we understand ourselves most clearly. Hence to say that the state is merely a rhetorical figure is to miss much. The creator of a state writes out a man in larger letters and gives what he thinks satisfies the requirements of things human. Ethics and Politics are not diverse sciences.[3] I propose therefore that for the time being we attempt to take the suggestions of the *Republic* seriously and to see if some justification on a much more important plane than the literary cannot be found.

The point I wish to draw is very simple: a very sharp distinction must be made between the general metaphysical conclusions of Plato in his politics and his errors within the field of the particular. His social theory is but one of many consistent applications of the dualism that is his essential tenet, the existence of the two worlds of *being* and of *becoming,* and of two corresponding species of cognition: *opinion* and *scientific knowledge.* Within this doctrine we meet as perfect a formulation of the analogy of being as the whole of Greek philosophy was able to bequeath to the West as well as a constant confident assertion of the dynamism which moves the world in its aspiration after the perfection of the Ideas. These Ideas are the perfection of being toward which the whole world of becoming tends, always falling short of them.[4] It has become fashionable to admit that Plato has formulated no philosophic system, an admission which, though in a certain technical sense true, is in the main absurd. I doubt if anywhere there is to be found a more perpetual, more consistent application of a few philosophic principles than that of those here given to all the practical phases of Athenian life, whether it be to the art of poetry in the *Republic,* or of statesmanship in the *Politicus,* or even of cooking or the management of a beauty parlor in the *Gorgias.* As we shall see, in the fields of making and of action only those who have studied the true principles and perfect images of things are capable of acting perfectly and of making well. And therefore if Plato advocates an "absolute" state it is only because he is ever demanding that the ideal polity be founded on the eternal order of things, that it be an image of the Absolute.[5]

Only such a state as this can validly go so far as to compel men even by violence to conform their lives to any sort of dictated pattern.[6] But a totalitarian state, containing in itself its own ultimate principle of validity, is a thing unknown to the founder of the Academy. Nor is any special form of itself valid. The whole business of the statesman is to direct all things toward an immutable good and as Christopher Dawson remarks[7] "even a dictatorship which deprives us of our political liberty would be preferable to an order which denies those fundamental spiritual rights without which human life loses its *raison d'etre.*"

Our understanding of the political views of Plato will be further clarified if we realize how consistently all that has so far been said is supported by the whole direction of his epistemology. But one major phase need be stressed here: All merely instinctive devotions to facts or truths in the world of becoming—and these may extend from the mathematical guesses of *Meno* to the patriotism of the *Republic* guardian—must be buttressed by rigorous intellectual processes. Nothing temporal has any value unless it can be given some absolute foundation. This point is most essential to our theme because certainly the political liberty of the individual will never be safeguarded until the state recognizes that it is not itself an ultimate fact but is derived from and limited by what we in our day call the natural law. One example of the Platonic spirit and method, that of the elevation of the state in the fourth book of the *Republic* to the level of that of the sixth and seventh may be found in the following:

We begin with a city so constructed as to win admiration and devotion (though the necessity still remains to convince its guardians of their patriotic debt by a myth).[8] But in the fifth book the extremes to which we have already seen this order to have been pushed make the auditors cry out at the human impossibility of it all,[9] and Socrates is forced to the famous confession that this utopia shall never be realized until philosophers become kings or kings philosophers.[10] It will be their vision of the Good, achieved by the education outlined in the seventh book, that will render possible the construction of and devotion to such a city because it will be seen to be patterned on the eternal. Study the dialectical march involved in that education. The philosophic prince will from his earliest years be trained by contact with the One, with beauty, with that which possesses form, in the sensible order of literature and the arts.[11] Later he will advance to the study of the sciences where he will draw the One in larger and larger ways from the many. He will begin with arithmetic,[12] merely with number, the simplest form of philosophic unification of reality. He will advance to other sciences, to plane geometry, solid geometry, astronomy, harmonics; the ideal will ultimately be a discovery of all the unities in the universe, all its different "stories." Finally dialectics, or philosophy, will discover the kinship between these varied sciences, will come to see that they all form but one pattern, that there is a single strain sounding throughout the universe.[13] And just as the definition is the clearest expression in human terms of an Idea, so the perception of this single song of the sciences is the clearest picture we can form of the transcendental Idea of the Good. It is to this summit that the politician must come before he can bring light to the cave. He must subject his state to truth.

There is no Hegelian version of the state here. The state is not the final expression of the Idea. The Absolute will never be realized perfectly upon earth.[14] And neither degree of temporal glory nor any particular type of polity can make him shout out at the reaching of any evolutionary peak. The *Gorgias* for example, with its fierce criticism of the greatest of Athens' dead statesmen, probably gives

us the best background of the condemnation of Socrates.[15] These politicians may have made the city splendid and great but, in so far as they failed to rule according to a deep knowledge of the meaning of human nature, the fall to come must be attributed to them. And it may be noted how in the *Politicus* the rule neither of the few nor of the many nor of the rich nor of the poor has any particular consecration unless it be a rule according to scientific knowledge of what is permanently good.

But it becomes wearisome to restrict ourselves to individual texts and dialogues. Perhaps it is better to avoid missing the forest for the trees by taking a more remote and more spontaneous view of things. It is very easy to view Plato as a mere metaphysician whose fundamental political concepts are healthy enough but whose permanent residence in the Ideal makes him useless to men or whose errors in the world of the particular rob him of all credit. Partially true, surely. But once again the forest for the trees. Frequently I am tempted to push all texts aside and determine to live for a time merely with the character of Socrates, to watch him, if I may, as he drinks his company under the table and goes off to a day's work, to see him taking the delight of a child in his battles with the Sophists, or sitting under a plane tree with his feet in a brook, or retreating with majestic calm in war, or drawing a tear of shame from the great Alcibiades, or ordering the payment of a cock to Asclepius, and dying. If you have lived with your friends then you will know they could never have meant this they seem to say. Does he insist in the *Politicus* that men be ruled according to a number of fixed principles contained in an art? He does, but this Socrates, who knew the complications of things human so well, could never be ruled by a set of abstractions. Hence his rejection in the same dialogue of a constitution, written, unchangeable, of itself sacrosanct, and his establishment of equity, of the philosophic ruler who should recognize the radius of change to which circumstances might force law.[16] So too if we adopt for a moment an aprioristic faith in the humanity of Socrates we will admire from afar his splendid gesture of defiance and his death; but we will also begin to expect that same highmindedness shown on the part of a sane man toward the existing order of things in the *Crito* when he refuses to escape from prison. Nowhere is there an insane call for an ideal state or nothing; take the order as it is as the second best thing. In a word we do not know our Socrates until we see in him two sides: the passionate quest of the ideal and the gracious acceptance of things human; the construction of a perfect state but the devotion of a citizen to a not-too-perfect Athens; the singing of a holy song to the love of universal beauty but the taking of an interlude for the more earthly song of Alcibiades—or the hiccoughs of Aristophanes. This is that sweet saving thing men call a sense of humor.

Shall we conclude without qualification that such a man would ever have pushed the conduct of things political to an impossible order based on an extreme of mathematics and logic? He knew what logic and the strict isolation of metaphysics from the ramification of things human could do. He could use his dialectic to show that Protagoras and the pig and the dog-faced baboon were in the same category as equally lords and creators of truth.[17] And he could laugh even at his own logic in the later dialogues as he discovers with his tongue in his cheek that the maker of categories has equalized the general and the louse-hunter,[18] the human being and once again our homely pig.[19]

I was not altogether surprised therefore to find that there was not as much communism in Plato as some would like. Not even in the *Republic*—for in the eighth book we suddenly hear him taking it for granted that one of the great causes of the serial decline of his perfect state is the yielding of their grip by the holders of property and the concentration of their wealth in the hands of the aristocratic few.[20] There is little mention of the people in the first half of that work—the basis of another serious charge. But it is not altogether because he is not conscious of them. Perhaps he knew that, just as the sign of perfect health in the stomach and other organs is that their activity should not reach the level of consciousness, so too in a perfect state the mass of the people may not be a politically noisy element. They will be too content with their peace. But if the state corrupts them the story is different; the corruption is more ordinarily from below, at the core of mass morality. Apparently therefore it had been the possession of the land that was one of the silent factors of perfection and its surrender that marked a fall. Apparently too the communistic elements had been for the guardians of the state alone, for perfect men. The point is made more explicit in the Laws.[21] Here once again there is the restatement that all things should be in common in the best of all states; but there follows immediately a set of provisions for the second best state (for men such as we actually have) which carefully apportion out property and insist very rigorously on the holding of it.

We turn to a final problem, that of the strict regimentation of the life and work of the individual by the state, his restriction to the narrowest of tasks for the common good. One fact that should be stressed is that this regimentation was not the result of some a priori principle of strict order. Rather it proceeded from an empirical observation made at the very beginning of things that each man is *by his nature* best fitted for one task above all others.[22] It is the study of individual natures that has dictated the development of the state and not the reverse. And after all it is ourselves who, with a superficial devotion to versatility, have come to neglect the fact that every man has a vocation, a special job to perform, a particular little portion of reality he may help to bring to the perfection of the Idea. As a matter of fact the idea of vocation has been almost completely destroyed in our day by the industrial revolution. This concept is the strongest basis we can find for private property. For if a man must be moral to save his soul he cannot be moral *in vacuo;* he must be so in his work. And as salvation is terribly his own so too must be that work. While therefore we may look in vain for a Platonic text that will solve the cotton surplus, there

do seem to be a number of passages which recognize this far more fundamental problem.

Should not this preoccupation with the individual be the point both of beginning and of conclusion for this paper? For any one who grasps it will never easily admit any Platonic fervor for an absolute state at the cost of human personality. He who has read but once the intensely religious myths of the *Phaedrus*, the *Gorgias*, the *Phaedo* and the *Republic* will know how intent the author of these dialogues is upon the salvation of the human soul and not the destiny of states. He is forever either insisting that the whole function of the state is to make men better[23] or denouncing politicians who have failed to realize this end. And finally when he is warned that it is humanly impossible for such an ideal state as his to come into being he gives that most splendid of all answers that, though there never has been nor is nor shall be such a state on earth, at least he who is of good will, studying a model that is in heaven, may fashion a perfect city in his own soul.[24]

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8. *Republic* 414D ff.
9. *Ibid.*, 472A-B.
10. *Ibid.*, 473C-D.
11. *Ibid.*, 401B-C-D.
12. *Ibid.*, 522 ff.
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14. *Ibid.*, 472C-D, 592A-B.
15. *Gorgias* 503B ff.
16. *Politicus* 300C-D.
17. *Theaetetus* 161C.
18. *Sophist* 227B.
19. *Politicus* 266C.
20. *Republic* 552A.
21. *Laws* 739C ff.
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Schiller's Attack on Formal Logic

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Logic is a stern master; they feel it, they protest against it; they profess to hate it, and would fain dispense with it; but it is the law of their intellectual nature.—Newman, *Difficulties* I, p. 31.

THE 1938 Winter issue of *The Personalist* contains an assault upon Formal Logic by the late Professor F. C. S. Schiller. It is an amazing document to proceed from a man of his position. One would expect a careful scholar to exhibit a clear understanding of the subject he was discussing, especially when it was his purpose to attack it. But Professor Schiller has misrepresented his subject. A man who had received a thorough grounding in Formal Logic and who was cautious in applying his knowledge would never have argued as Schiller has done. Certainly a clear-headed writer would not have recourse to arguments which could be turned against him, and yet this is the kind of arguments which we find in the article under review.

Before examining Schiller's arguments, let us set down in brief what Logic professes to do and what it does not profess to do. First, it does not profess to prove that there are such things as arguments, propositions, and terms. These things constitute the data of Logic and we have them in our possession before we take up the study of that science. Secondly, Logic does not profess to teach us how to think. If we did not know how to think before we began the study of Logic, we should never be able to master it. You cannot teach Logic to a cow. Thirdly, Logic does not profess to tell us what premises are true and what are false; if it did, it would put us in possession of the whole encyclopedia of knowledge, and all truth whatever would be packed between the covers of a logical treatise. Fourthly, Logic does not profess to furnish us with a guarantee against error. Not even Logic can confer the gift of infallibility upon fallible men.

What, then, does Logic profess to do? It professes to create in the man who masters it a habit of clear and connected thinking, an impatience with what is vague and confused, a confidence in the construction of his own arguments, and a facility in appraising the arguments of others. Of course, there are men of genius who do not need a formal training in Logic; they are gifted by nature with what the average man can only acquire by an effort. Doubtless there have been writers on Logic who have made extravagant claims in its behalf; but when a man undertakes a serious criticism of a science, he does not confine himself to what a few writers have said in praise of it; he makes an honest effort to understand the science itself.

The logician does not evolve the science of Logic out of his own head. He appeals to facts and data which are the common possession of mankind. He appeals especially to examples of arguments which everybody recognizes to be valid and to others which everybody recognizes to be invalid. He studies these arguments till he has discovered the principles which govern the validity of an argument, and these principles he calls the Rules of Logic. Again, he lays down a statement which is self-evident to everybody, namely, that if you wish to prove a proposition, you must make sure of two things: (1) that your premises are true; and (2) that the proposition follows from your premises. Thus, we have this general principle: *If the premises are true and if the premises cannot be true without the conclusion being true, then the conclusion is true.*

Beyond cautioning the student to see to it that his premises are true, the logician is not concerned with the truth of the premises. His main purpose is to determine when the premises *cannot* be true without the conclusion being true, and when they *may* be true without the conclusion being true. When the premises cannot be true without the conclusion being true, the conclusion is said to be *valid;* otherwise it is said to be *invalid.*

The logician does not entertain the design with which Schiller credits him, viz., "that the syllogism should tactily supersede the notion of truth by that of 'validity' " (p. 18). The logician lays upon the student the emphatic injunction: "Make sure that your premises are true." In default of true premises, the argument, considered as a proof, is worthless. Schiller seems to imply (pp. 19, 24) that we can never be sure that the premises are true. Well, that is the dogmatic assertion of the sceptic, and we do not propose to follow him in his sceptical wanderings. Besides, it is not a slur on Logic alone; it is a slur on mathematics and every other science, and it renders abortive any attempt on the part of the sceptic to conduct an argument. Not even the sceptic can argue without premises, and in offering us a premise, he is asking us to accept it as true.

Everybody recognizes the truth of the following proposition: *If M is P, and S is M, then S is P.* That is a proposition, not a syllogism. In order to turn it into a syllogism, the three clauses of the proposition must be separately pronounced to be true. In laying down this proposition, we assert that the proposition itself is true, but we do not assert that any of its clauses is true. When we say that a given hypothetical proposition is true, we equivalently say that its consequent is valid. As a matter of fact, the truth of a hypothetical proposition and the validity of its consequent are one and the same thing. Hence, there can be no validity without truth. Not that any of the propositions of a given syllogism is true; but when the premises are made the antecedent, and the conclusion the consequent, of a hypothetical proposition, the proposition *must* be true if the consequent is valid.

Our everyday arguments are not commonly expressed in the full form of a syllogism. One of the premises is generally omitted. But if a man is to know that the conclusion is true and valid, he must know what the omitted premise is and also that it is true. Indeed, one of the distinct advantages of the study of Logic is that it accustoms a man to fix his attention upon the omitted premise.

Schiller's attack is mainly directed against that part of Logic which is occupied with the categorical syllogism, and he offers us what he claims are five objections to the syllogism. We shall consider these objections in the order in which he states them.

Schiller's first objection: "The truth of the premises always *could* be disputed, at least dialectically. A disputant could always say to his opponent, 'Please prove your premises' and the demand was fatal. . . . Clearly the syllogism was a form of proof in which an infinite regress lay artfully concealed" (p. 19). "[The astute and resolute antagonist] could always question its premises *ad infinitum*" (p. 24).

If there were any force in this objection, it would be an objection to every argument whatever, and it would be fatal to the whole argument which Schiller pursues in *The Personalist.* There cannot be an argument without premises, and Schiller is employing premises to prove that Formal Logic is nothing but a game. By the very statement of Schiller, his own premises could be questioned *ad infinitum,* and therefore, his argument proves nothing, because it can never be brought to a conclusion. Can Schiller *prove* that an astute and resolute antagonist could always question the premises of an argument? And if he attempted to prove it, could not another astute and resolute antagonist always question the premises of Schiller's argument? Again, does Schiller imagine that when a man is conducting an argument, he is always arguing with a flippant person? And does he imagine that a serious-minded man would consent to argue with such a person? A flippant person will utter the most irrelevant and nonsensical remarks on any occasion whatever, and what Schiller is pleased to call an "astute and resolute antagonist" is a flippant person. We have the Scriptural admonition to answer a fool according to his folly. Flippancy, if it is to be met at all, should be met with flippancy. The flippancy of Schiller's astute and resolute antagonist should be reciprocated somewhat as follows: "I deny that you have demanded of me that I prove my premises, and I challenge you to prove that you have made the demand." The sceptic is playing a losing game when he attempts to argue. From the nature of the case, his arguments will always rebound against his own position.

Schiller's second objection:

Let us take the traditional proof that every man must die. It argues thus: *all men are mortal, Socrates is a man, therefore Socrates is mortal.* . . . Common sense soon detects that unless the conclusion is true the major premise is false. That *Socrates is mortal* must be true, if *all men are mortal* is to be true. Hence it seems absurd to say that the mortality of all proves that of Socrates: the truth is that that of Socrates *goes to prove* that of all men. Plainly then the conclusion said to be proved is presupposed in the truth of the premises. So the argument is fallacious, and the technical name for its fallacy is *petitio principii* or begging the question (pp. 20-21).

There are five comments to be made on this passage. First, the example cited by Schiller is not put forth as a "proof that every man must die." If anyone ever put this forth as a proof of anything, he used it as a proof that *Socrates* must die. Secondly, the logician, if he knows his business, will not, in his capacity as logician, undertake to prove that Socrates is mortal. The mortality of Socrates is not part of Logic, any more than the existence of the sea serpent. Logic is secure in its position, whether Socrates is mortal or immortal. The logician could omit the example altogether and confine himself to symbols, and his doctrine would remain unaffected. The logician does not undertake to prove anything that is foreign to his subject. You are not attacking the logician's doctrine when you merely find fault with one of his examples, and especially when you mistake the purpose of his example. If a logician employed the example we are considering, he was equivalently saying to the student: "Let these

premises be regarded as true, and let them contain no ambiguity: then the conclusion must be regarded as true."

Thirdly, when Schiller says, "Common sense soon detects that unless the conclusion is true the major premise is false," he is unfair to common sense; he is imputing to it a lack of discernment. What he should have said is, that unless the conclusion is true *either* the major or the minor premise is false. But his words are an implicit admission of what in the same paragraph he denies, namely, that his example is a valid syllogism, that is, that the conclusion follows from the premises. If the conclusion of an argument does not follow from the premises, it is not true to say that unless the conclusion is true either the major or the minor premise is false. The conclusion of the following argument does not follow from the premises: *All horses are quadrupeds, All horses are animals, Therefore all animals are quadrupeds;* and hence it would be wrong to say in this case that unless the conclusion is true either the major or the minor premise is false.

Fourthly, supposing that a man knows that all men are mortal; that knowledge is not sufficient by itself to inform him that Socrates is mortal. His knowledge that all men are mortal must first be supplemented by the knowledge that Socrates is a man. Supposing that Socrates, instead of being a man, were an island in the Pacific Ocean; the knowledge that all men are mortal would not then be convincing evidence that Socrates is mortal. A knowledge of the truth of both premises is required before the premises can be said to be a proof of the conclusion.

Fifthly, Schiller says that "the conclusion said to be proved is presupposed in the truth of the premises." If these words were taken to mean that the conclusion is *implied* in the truth of the premises, they would be stating what is true of every proof. But Schiller does not mean this; he means that the conclusion of every syllogism must be known to be true *before* we can know the truth of the premises, and that this applies especially to the truth of the universal major premise. He means that even if we know the truth of a universal proposition, that proposition cannot be employed to prove the truth of any proposition that refers to a definite person or object. Thus, according to his statement, the following is not a valid argument: *All plane triangles are figures in which the sum of the angles is equal to two right angles; The figure referred to in the text-book is a plane triangle; Therefore, the figure referred to in the text-book is a figure in which the sum of the angles is equal to two right angles.* Schiller claims that the first premise of this argument cannot be known to be true till after we have learned that the conclusion is true. Now the question, how we justify our knowledge of the truth of universal propositions and how we justify the application of such propositions to the proof of other propositions, is a question which belongs to Epistemology, not to Logic; and there is no space to enter into it here. For the present purpose, it is sufficient to observe that throughout his article Schiller himself employs universal propositions in his effort to prove his contention. He repeatedly uses the words "always," "never," "all," "every," and "no." These words are signs of universal propositions, and therefore, by his theory Schiller is not entitled to employ propositions which contain these signs. Sometimes he omits the universal proposition, but it is understood in his argument. Thus, in the paragraph on which we are commenting he says that his example of the syllogism is fallacious because it contains a *petitio principii.* But that would not be a reason for pronouncing it fallacious unless *all arguments containing a petitio principii are fallacious.* The universal proposition we have just italicized, though it is omitted by Schiller, is nevertheless essential to the validity of his argument; and yet by his theory he is precluded from using it and even from leaving it to be understood, because he claims that we could not know it to be true till after we know the truth of his conclusion. On his own showing, therefore, his argument contains a *petitio principii* and is fallacious.

Schiller's third objection:

> When we put together two premises which we believe to be true, we can never be sure in advance that they will not put us to shame by leading to a false conclusion. . . . [Ambiguity] may *always* happen. For it depends on the contexts in which the middle term is used, and it always must be used in two contexts, the difference between which may always disrupt the argument. . . . A formal logician, when he comes to grief in this way, will of course declare, "Well, that middle always was ambiguous, and there never was a syllogism at all." This is true, but irrelevant; it does not meet the difficulty that we can only find out the defect when we try to use our premise, and *after* our argument has gone wrong . . . Logic can only discover the mistake after it has been committed, and is altogether wisdom after the event. Formal Logic thereby confesses that it is incapable of guiding thought and of averting blunders. . . . It will let us "prove" conclusions which are falsified by the event. In short, it is ridiculous (pp. 22-23).

This is an astounding statement. It means that a man can never be sure that he is using a term twice in the same sense! Was ever such a low estimate placed upon human intelligence? Is it impossible for a man to know what he means by a term when he uses it in more than one context? Schiller says that a man can only know it after he has completed his argument. But if he *can* know it then, what stands in the way of his knowing it in the *process* of the argument? Are men in generol so ignorant and stupid that they cannot know the meaning of the words they use at the time they use them? And if they cannot know it then, by what magic can they know it after the argument is completed? Schiller says "Logic can only discover the mistake after it has been committed." Well, has anyone ever discovered a mistake *before* it was committed? But supposing a man discovers that he has made the mistake of using a term in two senses in the same argument, is he not allowed to profit by his mistake? Must he lose the memory of it and never be sure that he is not repeating that mistake in subsequent arguments? In the course of his article in *The Personalist* Schiller is continually using the same term in different contexts, and the very intelligibility of his argument, to say nothing of its validity, depends upon the term being taken in the same sense. Are we to understand, then, that Schiller cannot be sure of the intelligibility of his argument? In the foregoing quotation Schiller draws the conclusion that Formal Logic is ridiculous, and the premise he employs to prove this conclusion is that Formal Logic "will let us 'prove'

conclusions which are falsified by the event." The major premise, which he has omitted, is this: "Anything that will let us 'prove' conclusions which are falsified by the event is ridiculous." The middle term of his argument is "thing that will let us 'prove' conclusions which are falsified by the event." According to his own statement, Schiller cannot be sure that this term is used in the same sense in the two premises, and therefore, he cannot be sure that he is justified in drawing his conclusion.

Schiller's fourth objection: "[Formal Logic] has always sustained the pretension that a syllogistic proof could justify prediction. Indeed, successful prediction was the covert, though unavowed, aim of the syllogistic form, and a large part of its charm" (p. 23).

This must come with a shock of surprise to the logician and set him wondering how he happened to miss a large part of the charm of his science. If the aim of predicting the future ever existed in the mind of the logician, Schiller is undoubtedly right in declaring that it was unavowed. But where is the proof that it was the *covert* aim of the logician? You can only predict the future by means of premises that have some reference to the future. And where is a man to get these premises? He certainly will not get them out of a treatise on Logic. Logic does not pretend to provide a man with premises for everything he wishes to prove. Logic tells him how to use his premises when he has them. The logician can, if you like, make a safe prediction that a certain event will never happen in the future. He can predict that no one will ever make a successful attack on the principles of Logic.

Schiller's fifth objection:

How is syllogistic (or, indeed, any sort of deductive) prediction to be rendered compatible with the growth of knowledge and the changes in the meaning of terms which this must entail? (p. 23).

Here Schiller is again imputing to the logician the pretension of predicting the future. We have just seen that if a man is to predict the future, he must know something besides Formal Logic. As to "the growth of knowledge and the changes in the meaning of terms," well, knowledge has grown and terms have changed their meaning for over two thousand years, but during all that time the principles of Logic have remained unchanged. If terms change their meaning, the logician can employ new terms, terms which express and preserve the original meaning of his principles. If he should be frightened by Schiller's prediction of what is going to happen in the future, the logician could invent a set of technical terms to serve his purpose, or he could translate his treatise into Latin where terms do not change their meaning.

We may now bring our comments to a close, though we have set down only part of what might be said in answer to the article in *The Personalist*. Schiller misconceived the function and scope of Formal Logic, and that is one reason why he is so angry with it. It was the purpose of his article to prove that Logic is only a game, and not an "agent of value"; and in his attempt to accomplish his purpose, he resorted to arguments which on his own theory are fallacious. It is a high tribute to Formal Logic, and a powerful proof of its enduring value, that this is the only kind of case that can be constructed against it.

[*Continued from p.* 8]

comprehending in their fullness the probabilities which flow from the moral and psychological context he is studying.

Moreover, if a choice for or against the transcendence of mystical experience becomes sooner or later inevitable, nothing obliges the psychologist to take sides in an *absolute* manner; his choice may remain *conditioned*. One might even conceive that he adopt successively, by hypothesis, the two horns of the dilemma for the purpose of noting what would become, in each hypothesis, of the psychology of mysticism—a comparison, to say the least, very instructive.

The hypothesis of non-transcendence, by imposing the task of reconstituting the entire mystical life out of common psychological elements, leads almost fatally to the danger of premature constructions of a kind that impede the spirit of research rather than promote it. In addition, such a procedure results in seeking the essential elements of mysticism in the very things which the great mystics agree in regarding as accidental. It is superfluous to insist upon the disadvantage of this inconsistency, and upon the poverty of the so-called psychological reconstructions of higher forms of prayer.

The hypothesis of transcendence, by the connection which it establishes between mystical psychology and metaphysics or theology, tends on the contrary to cast new light on the meaning of the descriptive elements previously assembled under a doctrinal choice. This sublimation of those very elements of mystical life, which appeared governed by the ordinary laws, may disconcert the professional psychologist and give him the none too agreeable impression of having to revive his first observations in order to interpret them on a different scale.

One might imagine a comparative study in three columns devoted to the life and interior experiences of a few of the Christian mystics more frequently studied by the psychologists. The first column would present a purely psychological interpretation based upon the hypothesis of non-transcendence; the second column an interpretation at once psychological and theological according to the hypothesis of transcendence; the third column would display, without commentary, original biographical and mystical documents.

I do not think that Catholics have anything to fear from such a comparison. It would not only bring out, by contrast, the fullness and superior beauty of the second interpretation but also its infinitely better accord with the imperfect data of experience and of history.

When everything has been considered, is a "psychology of mysticism" possible or impossible? The question, in the general terms in which it is phrased, appears to us to call for the following answer:

1. The purely psychological study of mystics, even of Christian mystics, is possible in a very large degree.

2. A "psychology of mysticism" cannot be complete, i. e. cannot perfectly order its data, without including hypotheses foreign to pure psychology.

3. But it is not obliged to adopt one of these hypotheses to the exclusion of the others as long as the psychological consequences of the latter remain compatible with directly observed facts.

NOTES

1. Despite doctrinal divergences more or less profound, a Catholic must acknowledge the desire of impartiality manifest in such writers as W. James, J. B. Pratt, H. Delacroix, not to mention H. Bergson, who belongs rather to the class of philosophers than to that of professional psychologists.

2. This statement requires a slight modification. Just as psychopathology may pass for a sort of counterbalance to normal psychology so morbid deviations of mysticism may pass, in some measure, for a sort of natural test of mysticism. A natural test of the same kind, but positive in character, seems realized by the very perpetuity of mysticism in the course of history; more and more clearly, under contingent variations, the "invariable" features become evident. Something, therefore, in the mystical experience repeats itself by formal identity, and it can be said that the history of mysticism progressively develops before our very eyes the experimental *control* which we ourselves are incapable of evolving. Unfortunately the interpretation of these lessons of history is not yet easy. Do these constant resemblances follow literary dependences, the identity of human nature, a certain regularity of supernatural grace, the unity of the supernatural object of contemplation?

Book Reviews

THE DEGREES OF KNOWLEDGE

Jacques Maritain

Translation by Bernard Wall and Margot R. Adamson

Scribner's, New York, 1938, pp. xviii + 475, $6.00

The present edition merits special notice, answering as it does a need long felt by those who find Maritain's scintillating French beyond their linguistic resources. The translators have professedly adhered strictly to the original, not omitting the profound introduction on Metaphysics: its "Misery and Grandeur." First they give the discussion of experimental and philosophical knowledge, then the super-rational science of mysticism, culminating in the chapter—Todo y Nada. Maritain's singular competence in the diverse realms of mathematics and metaphysics as well as the more esoteric reaches of the dark-light, is too universally recognized to need further mention.

In undertaking this *opus magnum et arduum* the translators have aimed at producing rather a precise than a palatable version. The result, while adequate on that score, is far from being generally up to what we might expect from the editor of the *Colosseum*. It is far too literal to provide uniformly agreeable reading; repeatedly we feel that violence is done the English idiom, even beyond what Mr. Wall has prepared us for in his preface. In addition the reader is confronted with an alarming array of typographical blunders—misplaced French and Greek accents, inaccurate word-division, inconsistent capitalization, and highly original spellings. Furthermore, at times the work appears so hurried that clarity itself has suffered.

On the other hand I do not wish to minimize our debt of gratitude to the translators. The index has for some reason (a misapplication of Occam's razor?) been left out. We may also question the advisability of omitting page references in a work of scholarly pretensions and the substitution of brief summaries for Maritain's enlightening appendices.

CLEMENT J. MCNASPY.

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PROCEEDINGS: THE AMERICAN CATHOLIC PHILOSOPHICAL ASSOCIATION, 1937

The Catholic University of America, Washington, D. C., pp. 232

"Philosophy of Education" is the title of Volume Thirteen of the Proceedings of The American Catholic Philosophical Association. Dr. Mortimer J. Adler writes on "Tradition and Communication," Dr. Edward A. Fitzpatrick of Marquette University treats of "The Fundamentals of a Philosophy of Higher Education," and Dr. Robert J. Slavin of Catholic University of America elaborates "The Essential Features of the Philosophy of Education of St. Thomas." Other papers concern the respective rôles of science and philosophy in education and of religion in a democratic philosophy of education. The late Rev. Walter G. Summers of Fordham University, noted psychologist, discussed the "Bearing of Recent Psychology Upon a Philosophy of Education." Some interesting discussions on Logic, Ethics and the philosophy of law and government conclude the proceedings.

But the highlight of the book is easily the record of the Joint Session of The American Catholic Philosophical Association and the Eastern Division of The American Philosophical Association. Dr. Louis J. A. Mercier opened the session with his "A Re-examination of the Tradition of Dualism," and was answered by Professor Brand Blanshard of Swarthmore College. A further reply by Dr. Mercier is promised for a forthcoming number of *New Scholasticism*.

Dr. W. H. Sheldon of Yale University, representing the Eastern Division of The American Philosophical Association, speaks in his paper "On the Nature of the Union of Mind and Body." His work was thoroughly discussed by Dr. Gerald B. Phelan of The Institute of Medieval Studies, Toronto.

The Rev. Dr. William T. Dillon, retiring president of the Association, made an eloquent appeal in his presidential address for an articulate philosophy of law. THE MODERN SCHOOLMAN, as its response to this appeal, will present in a future number a symposium on such a philosophy.

T. KENNETH MCKENNEY.

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COSMOLOGY

[A Text for Colleges. Second Revised Edition.]

J. A. McWilliams, S. J., Ph. D.

Macmillan, New York, 1938, pp. 243, $2.00

The first edition of Father McWilliams' *Cosmology* was published in 1928. The first revised edition appeared in 1933, and was reprinted successively in 1935, 1936, and 1937, a sufficient indication of the wide favor which the work has received. In this second revised edition the original plan of the book has remained unchanged, but much of the text has been rewritten in the light of recent scientific advances and a considerable amount of new matter has been added.

The very numerous critical notices and reviews in the secular and religious press occasioned by the first appearance of *Cosmology* showed how necessary such a work had become for the English-speaking public. Reviewers hailed with delight Father McWilliams' very "modern" treatment of those perennial philosophic-scientific problems about the magnitude of the universe, teleology, evolution of the inorganic world, causality, the possibility of miracles, space and time. Catholic writers were glad to find the traditional aristotelico-thomistic arguments put into an accurate but very readable English idiom and applied to cosmological problems now rendered more difficult than ever because of the vast data gathered by physical science; while even reviewers whom scientific or religious prejudice prevented from agreeing with the conclusions arrived at were forced to admit that the author had met the scientists squarely on their ground and offered a thoroughly rational synthesis of science and reason. In effect, *Cosmology* insisted that science as science cannot give a complete explanation of the universe, even the material universe, as we find it: for an ultimate analysis it must submit its results to be ordered by philosophy.

An extended general review of Father McWilliams' book need not be undertaken here, since excellent accounts of this nature have

already been done by Monsignor Fulton J. Sheen (*Ecclesiastical Review,* March, 1929) and by Father Francis X. Downing (*New Scholasticism,* April, 1929). Among the questions to receive substantially new treatment in the present revised edition are those of time (chapter XI), efficient causality (chapter XII), atomism (chapter XVII), and part of the treatise on substantial form (chapter XVIII). A useful Summary is added to the last chapter, and the Bibliography has been enlarged. The revised portions exhibit the same conciseness, clarity, and inescapable logic noted by every critic of the first edition. W. E. Dooley.

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INTRODUCTION AU PROBLEME DE L'HISTOIRE DE LA PHILOSOPHIE

Hunter Guthrie

Alcan, Paris, 1937, pp. 306

This thesis presented to the Sorbonne by Father Guthrie of Fordham University, is an admirable example of how one may approach philosophy from an angle unfamiliar, for the most part, to Scholastics and yet explain many things they accounted for and many perhaps that they did not. One used to the Scholastics' vocabulary may be a bit disconcerted by the terminology. It recalls especially the modern German existential philosophers, Heidegger and Husserl, together with Blondel and other contemporary French philosophers who place a good deal of emphasis on "*action.*" For, this "introduction to the problem of the history of philosophy" is in reality a fairly complete metaphysics and epistemology of *bonum* and *verum,* the latter of which is subordinated to the former. It is an analysis of life on the run, of man's never-ceasing pursuit of perfection. This urge, which is called unrest—"*inquiétude*"—is not a sentiment or emotion but is present even in the subconscious. It is the natural reaching forward of a finite nature.

This movement is examined and found to be of twofold aspect. It moves toward the Absolute Being and toward the perfection of the ego. The former aspect is called "existential unrest," the latter "essential unrest"; the one advances towards union with the Absolute, the other towards personal perfection.

On the plane of consciousness, existential unrest reveals itself in the action of the will which strives towards union with actual being, while essential unrest is associated with the intellect because it seeks the ideal and the true. Thus throughout human nature the real motor power is existential unrest attracted by *bonum.* Essential unrest adapts what is attained to the capacity of human nature and thus is a deterrent to the former movement.

The advantage of such a point of view is that it does not reduce philosophy to a series of static concepts, mathematical in their rigidity. Man is examined by means of the deep current of forward striving which is at the depth of his being. We are examining the motor while it is working, not while it is at rest.

Perhaps one now wonders what all this has to do with the problem of the history of philosophy. It is this. The fundamental unrest of man is influenced by education, environment, and habit. Why do different systems of philosophy arise? Because the fundamental striving of human nature has received certain directions on the conscious and physical planes, is deviated by experience and habit and by a misplaced or overemphasized seeking of good in some particular quarter. The nostalgia for being has been allowed to run in certain channels only.

Such an exposé places the idea of good above that of truth because the former reveals the pulse of life, of movement, of reality as we know it. It is well to remember that no reproach is thereby intended to those who have treated the matter otherwise. The author simply has another point of view, which it seems is legitimate, since life is action and union, both of which are more intimately associated with the idea of the good than with that of the true.

The book opens up a new horizon for the endeavors of Scholastic philosophers. Whereas heretofore most Scholastics have developed and arranged fundamental principles of metaphysics and epistemology, Father Guthrie would now have us turn our attention to an examination of the manifestation of the deepest current of life and being, that quest for more perfect union with Absolute Being by a more perfect realization of our human nature. May this book be a stimulus towards a further development of thought and serve as a bridge between the time-honored Scholastic philosophy and certain fields of modern speculation. William M. Kegel.

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LA PHILOSOPHIE CHRÉTIENNE JUSQU' À DESCARTES III — LES SYSTÉMATISONS SCHOLASTIQUES DE LA PHILOSOPHIE CHRÉTIENNE (COLLECTION BIBLIOTHÈQUE CATHOLIQUE DES SCIENCES RELIGIEUSES)

B. Romeyer, S. J.

Bloud et Gay, Paris, 1937, pp. 186, 12 fr.

In the third volume of his series, *La philosophie chrétienne,* Fr. Romeyer undertakes to outline what is undoubtedly the most significant period in this long development: the centuries from the death of Augustine to the early years of the seventeenth century. At least six names of major importance for the history of philosophy come up for consideration, besides a host of minor thinkers. The period includes, too, such fundamental but distinct philosophic tendencies as the Augustinianism of earlier centuries, the new Aristotelianism, Thomism, and Scotism.

Within the limits of a single volume, Fr. Romeyer has accomplished a remarkable piece of synthesis. He has treated adequately but comprehensively each of the great figures and each significant movement, combining wide scholarship with an intelligent popularization. An astonishing amount of positive factual matter is accompanied by critical discussions and original suggestions of great value for a student of the period. It is especially interesting to note how the conception of a *Christian* philosophy is insisted upon throughout the book. Neoplatonic, Aristotelian, Arabic, and Jewish traditions profoundly affected the development of that philosophy: but they were assimilated by, and not merely superimposed on, the essentially Christian source of its inspiration. Fr. Romeyer's third volume is at least equal in erudition, clarity of exposition, and interesting treatment to the preceding volumes so favorably received by the foreign press. W. E. Dooley.

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THE PHILOSOPHY OF ST. BONAVENTURE

Etienne Gilson

Translation by Dom Illtyd Trethowan and F. J. Sheed

Sheed and Ward, New York, 1938, pp. xii + 551, $5.00

The study of St. Bonaventure has been comparatively neglected because he was regarded as only a potential and incomplete St. Thomas. M. Gilson shows that it was not because of ignorance or chance that St. Bonaventure did not become an Aristotelian, for he knew and deliberately rejected Aristotle. By dedicating himself to the task of continuing the teaching of Alexander of Hales he attached himself to a doctrine which was the radical negation of Aristotelianism. His busy life did not prevent him from bringing his doctrine to completion.

His approach to philosophy is quite different from that of St. Thomas. For him philosophy is a quest, a journey or ascent of the soul to immediate knowledge of God and communion with Him. We climb the pathway of reality to God. Hence St. Bonaventure holds that the intellect is illuminated by God. The whole system of St. Bonaventure is closely analyzed and the relation of one doctrine to another clearly shown. But, as M. Gilson points out, for a complete understanding of St. Bonaventure's doctrine, it is necessary to enter into the spirit of it. Such a doctrine is a way of life and cannot be described to those who are not living it.

This translation is very timely since the French edition is out of print. The complete omission of some of the notes and of considerable parts of others prevent it from taking the place of the French edition for scholarly work. The bibliography which is appended to the French edition is also omitted. William C. Grummel.